

Committee: House Economic Matters

Testimony on: HB 696 – The Electric School Bus Pilot Program

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 10, 2022

I am writing as a Maryland resident requesting a favorable review of HB 696, The Electric School Bus Pilot Program.

Almost 20 years ago, my daughter, who was then a student at Franklin Elementary in Reisterstown, had her first asthma attack. Neither my husband nor I had any history of asthma in our families and little experience with this terrifying respiratory ailment. The first incident occurred on a warm summer day after my daughter was running around playing with friends.

For people who have not experienced this, it is truly is terrifying watching your young otherwise healthy child suddenly struggle severely to breathe. Over the years, these attacks occurred more frequently and in unexpected places. A trip to Oriole Park triggered one such attack. Perhaps it was the grills outside the park or the air general pollution, but even a day at the ballpark was unsafe for my daughter without the aid of her inhaler.

While my daughter was a student, she rode the bus each day. We live on the edge of a rural area and the ride was about 40 minutes to get to our neighborhood. At the time, Baltimore County did not allow students to carry any medication, *including a rescue inhaler* with them. So for about an hour every day my daughter was vulnerable to having a potentially deadly attack, just trying to get to school and back. I feel it's important to mention that my daughter had mild to moderate asthma, yet it was pretty routinely traumatic for her and us even with careful management.

About 1 in 10 children suffer from asthma in Maryland. For these children, sometimes even a modest reduction in their exposure to pollution can be the difference between getting by or having an asthma attack that day. We know that diesel school buses can generate harmful levels of particulate matter (PM 2.5), shouldn't we protect our most vulnerable and help to improve their air quality?

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 696.

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